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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE EDMONTON PUBLIC LIBRARY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION DIVISION: AN ELEMENT IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

by

© Larry John Hendricks

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS.

DIVISION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled

The Edmonton Public Library Government Information Division:

An Element in Community Development

submitted by Larry John Hendricks

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Supervisor

Date April 23 1977

Dedicated to the Principle

That "knowledge will always govern ignorance, and people who intend to govern themselves must provide and equip themselves with the power that knowledge gives".

G. W. (Jed) Baldwin (MP Peace River);
House of Commons Debates: 2/12/76: 10891

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a case history tracing the short but continuing history of the Government Information Division in the Edmonton Public Library. It places the Government Information Division within the context of communications theory and relates it to the situation in both Community Development and Libraries through a review of the literature; outlines the history of the Division; reviews the current developments in all levels of government concerning the public's right to information about its operations; and proposes guidelines for the future action of the Division based upon current developments as well as the principles learned from its past experience.

The history of the Government Information Division emphasizes the objectives of the Division while showing the obstacles that were encountered in an attempt to stand by the principles laid down in its objectives.

The review of the recent developments in the Canadian, Albertan and City of Edmonton governments considers public access to government information.

The guidelines bring together the history of the Government Information Division and the review of current developments to indicate the direction in which the Division could proceed in the continuing attempt to implement its objectives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to several people for their assistance in the completion of this report. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Hynam for his assistance and guidance. I would also like to thank the Edmonton Public Library for assisting me during the preparation of this report. A special thanks goes to Barbara Pegg for the time and effort she spent in proofreading this thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE: NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

THE PROBLEM

Many people in many ways have stated that, "Knowledge (Information) is power". Information is the base upon which people make decisions and choose alternate courses of action. More information provides the background from which additional directions can be seen and upon which an individual or group can arrive at the most appropriate alternative for them.

> "Being able to describe what has happened in the past gives a person weight in decision making. Furthermore, managers who develop for themselves continuing education programs and become sources of information in decision making increase their influence. Regardless of the kind of knowledge the manager has - this knowledge bestows upon him personal power" (8; p. 129-130).

In other words, information gives the individual more power over a given situation and consequently more control over his life.

To place this hypothesis into context it is in order to examine at a cursory level information, mass communication and the two-way relationship of government and mass communication. It should be noted here that as one follows the progession of this discussion one moves continually further away from the definition of information. When W. Schramm defines information in terms of information theory he states, "Information is defined in terms of its ability to reduce the uncertainty or disorganization of a situation at the receiving end" (67; p. 714). A more elaborate definition of communication also within the area of concern here (public relations) states,

> "The public relations man is a manager of institutional communication. His aim is to convey information to others and to influence their attitudes and behavior. Many consequences flow out of this attempt to inform and influence, and their impact must be understood by an effective and responsible communicator. Attention must also be given to the return flow of information from audiences to the communicator, because the minds of others must be understood if there is to be a meaningful link between a sender and receiver of communications. This fourth element of empathy is, therefore, added to information, influence and impact as constituting the basic elements of communication" (57; p. 219).

This highly important definition of institutional communication and its four

components: information, influence impact and empathy will be referred to later in this presentation.

H.D. Lasswell, in summarizing the structure and function of communication in society, states,

> "The communication process in society performs three functions: (a) surveillance of the environment, disclosing threats and opportunities affecting the value position of the community and of the component parts within it; (b) correlation of the components of society in making a response to the environment; (c) transmission of social inheritance... In society, the communication process reveals special characteristics when the ruling element is afraid of the internal as well as the external environment. In gauging the efficiency of communication in any given context, it is necessary to take into account the values at stake, and the identity of the group whose position is being examined. In democratic societies, rational choices depend upon communication; and especially upon the equivalence of attention among leaders, experts and rank and file" (56; p. 189).

To exemplify the relevance of this quotation take any law whether it be a Federal statute on Bilingualism or a Provincial statute on planning or a city traffic bylaw. It is enacted as a result of a need in the community; such a need can only be ascertained accurately by adequate surveillance of the environment.

With regard to correlation, laws dictate how people in a community are to repond under certain circumstances. Finally, it is clear that laws transmit values and social inheritance. The use of the three functions of communication in this manner not only apply to laws but also to regulations and policies because of their nature they are very similar.

Secondly, consider statistical information of any type which can include census, industrial production labor, cultural activities, crime, social services and so forth. In the surveillance and correlation functions statistics are an orderly statement of current conditions. In the social transmission

function it can be stated that this information can be used to establish trends on which laws, regulations and policies can be based. Also as historical information it can show progress and development.

Finally, consider the average report published by government. In the surveillance sense these studies report on a need or situation. The correlation aspect comes into play in that the study brings together relevant material and recommends a course of action. The transmission aspect comes to bear in the fact that the report was, in fact, published.

Each of these examples could, in fact be analyzed differently because of the nature of the subject. They could also be analyzed differently depending on how one defines each of the three terms. As well each example could emphasize any one of the three functions depending on the point a particular author may wish to make.

What is important is establishing the fact that there is a relationship between mass communication and government and that relationship extends to the level of a partnership. As Lasswell points out, information obtained via mass communication leads to enlightenment and rational choices. It is equally important to note that the role of the Government Information Division in this relationship is to act as depository for government information and as such an access point for the community to get government information on which to base rational choices. The rational for this role is outlined later in this chapter under the heading "Information in Community Development" and the details of this depository and access role are outlined in the Government Information Division Position Paper in Appendix A. W. Schramm brings a third partner into the government - mass communication relationship - economics. He states,

> "By the same token, society makes certain economic arrangements before it can do certain things with communications, and it must do certain things with communication before it can do certain things with economics. For example, it must provide a basis of financial support before it can maintain a newspaper, and it must advertise or otherwise spread the news of goods for sale before it can build a wide market for manufacturers. A development in one line stimulates

> developments in the other. A more efficient communication system makes industrial development easier. More and better newspapers. The more that people feel able to take part in political activities, the more they feel the need for education and information. The more information they get, the more they are interested in politcal developments. The more education they have, the more they seek information. The typical history of communication development in countries where it is farthest advanced is a chain of interactions in which education, industry, urbanization, national income, political participation, and the mass media have all gone forward together, stimulating each other" (66; p. 35-36).

Although the impact of economics on mass communications is important it is necessary to narrow the discussion of mass communication to focus on its relationship with government. One must not, however, lose sight of the impact of economics since it provides both a motivation and rationale for the development of the government - mass communication relationship.

The importance of the government - mass communication relationship is outlined by Lucian Pye when he states,

> "In a broad sense the political process as a whole is influenced by access to the mean of communications. Questions about the ease of access and the existence of limitations to the use of mass media touch upon some of the most important issues determining the character and stability of political life in any society. Indeed, an examination of the conditions for obtaining access to various forms of communication usually is a highly rewarding way of comparing political systems, for such an approach can not only reveal how control and power are distributed in different systems but also can provide information about the very character of power itself in each society. From such an approach we can readily perceive fundamental differences between totalitarian and authoritarian systems; in the former, control extends to an attempt to monopolize nearly all existing communications process in the society, while in authoritarian systems control of access is

limited to only certain critical aspects of the total communication process" (64; p. 58-59).

As can be seen here any government's access or lack of it to the mass media can have a profound effect on the political life of a society, as shown in the examples of non-democratic societies above. As one begins to recognize the importance of governments having at least access to, if not control of the mass media it also becomes apparent that the information component of government communication to its citizens is relegated to but a minor role among the four components of communication. These components, mentioned previously, were information, influence, impact and empathy. Regarding democratic societies the following statements have been made.

> "In politics communication makes possible public opinion, which when organized, is democracy... Democracy has arisen here, as it seems to be arising everywhere in the civilized world, not, chiefly because of changes in the formal constitution, but as the outcome of conditions which make it natural for the people to have and to express a consciousness regarding questions of the day" (35; p. 152).

Upon recognizing that the government-public opinion relationship is not only a two-way relationship but also has several other aspects, all of which have been studied by communication researchers in great detail, one question still continues to come to mind. Since government has the monopoly on the information in this relationship, is it playing fair? This question leads one to explore the area of government propaganda.

> "Equal access to the facts becomes more and more difficult. The power of governments over the sources of information tends to grow. Hence the misuse of this power by governments becomes a more and more serious danger. Governments withhold one part of the facts and use the other for sales talk. This tendency is fostered by general worship of efficient salesmanship. Hence we observe an increasing amount of government activity in the field of what is called 'propaganda', via., the creation by government of various kinds of information and publicity, thus emphasizing and stimulating public interest and response in certain directions at the expense of other interests and ideas. Even when completely devoid of such intentions to falsify and propagandize, governments must make increasing use of communications. A modern government is an even greater participant in social and economic affairs.

> This had created a necessity for more extensive and better intercommunication between it and the public in the interests of both" (36; p. 221-222).

From this we can see that propaganda has a major impact in the political sphere. It has been defined, "as attempts to influence attitudes of large numbers of people on controversial issues of relevance to the group" (55; p. 267).

Should secrecy, propaganda, public opinion and their salesmanship be considered information in the sense of Schramm's definition? As defined previously, information has the ability to reduce the uncertainty or disorganization at the receiving end. It is out of this context and from this question that the motivation of this thesis has its origin. James Madison has summed up the situation of government - citizen communication very well when he stated, "A popular government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives" (58).

In summary, then, the context of this thesis has been developed in the following manner. The discussion begins with the measurement criteria, the definition of information. This is followed by the definition of communication which serves to outline the structure of communications. Next Lasswell's discussion provides the general function of communication in society and establishes that basic to society is a relationship between government and mass communication. Schramm then gives the motivation for government involvement in the communications areas. The impact on the political stability of a society is indicated by Pye in his comments on government access to mass media. The discussion is then concluded with an outline of the relationship between mass media and democratic governments, particularly the role of public opinion and propaganda measured against the criteria laid down by the definition of information.

From this discussion it can be seen that access to and use of the mass media as a means of disseminating its information is important to the survival of governments. In democratic societies it is also used to obtain the public's opinion of its programs and policies. The concern of this thesis is not so much the manipulation of citizens by government through the information it releases to the mass media but citizen access to government information so they can interpret it and then be able to have more meaningful input into the governing process. Through this input process people will then be able to have more control over their lives.

INFORMATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A major component of Community Development is the study of how to encourage people to gain more control over their lives. This is clearly relevant to citizens having access to information about controlling forces - government or otherwise. It provides the context from which the motivation for this thesis has arisen; but it appears from the literature that Community Development has so far failed to emphasize the importance of adequate and accurate information and thus has often failed to utilize the results of the empathy component of communication to its advantage. Empathy, it will be remembered, was described as, "the return flow of information from audiences to the communicator, because the minds of the others must be understood if there is to be a meaningful link between the sender and receiver of communications" (57; p. 219).

Consider the conflict and cooperation modes used in most Community Development models. The National Training Labratories (Institute of Behavioral Science) describes these two modes in an article, "How to choose between Strategies of Conflict and Corroboration." Some of the ingredients of the conflict mode are described as follows:

"1. Behavior is purposeful in pursuing own goals.
2. Secrecy.
3. Accurate personal understanding of own needs, publicly disguised or misrepresented.
4. Unpredictable, mixed strategies, utilizing element of surprise.
5. Threats and bluffs.

6. Search behavior is devoted to find ways of appearing to become committed to a position.
7. Success is often enhanced by projecting bad stereotype of others, by ignoring the other's logic, by increasing the level of hostility" (61; p. 74).

In the conflict situation, no matter how organized or angry a group may be, unless that group understands what its opposition's thinking and motivation is, it cannot create a strategy which will successfully frustrate the opposition. This understanding of the opposition's thinking and motivation cannot come from assumptions and stereotypes but must come from in-depth research and information available about the opposition. Using this information the group can create a sufficiently devious strategy which has a much higher chance of success. In a game theory sense a lose-lose or lose-win situation can be changed into a wine-lose outcome. In other words, in a given conflict situation the odds of winning are better with information about the opponent than without it. Saul Alinsky, a famous community organizer, used techniques which follow the conflict mode very closely. In accounts of Alinsky's work one can clearly see the important role played by his information about the opponent by looking at his choice of tactics as a means of using that information (5).

In the cooperation mode the situation is very similar, only negotiation is the accepted format. The National Training Labratories' article describes collaboration as:

"1. Behavior is purposeful in pursuing goals held in common.
2. Openness.
3. Accurate personal understanding of own needs; and accurate representation of them.
4. Predictable: while flexible behavior is appropriate, it is not designed to take other party by surprise.
5. Threats or bluffs are not used.
6. Search behavior is devoted to finding solutions to problems, utilizing logical and innovative processes.
7. Success demands that stereotypes be dropped, that ideas be given consideration on their merit regardlesss of sources and that hostility not be induced deliberately" (61; p. 75).

In this case, the group must have the same in-depth knowledge of the people on the other side of the table in order to create appropriate items for trade which the other side cannot refuse but can bargain for in such a way that the group can get what it wants.

In both conflict and cooperation modes described above the "critical mass" for success is information. In the conflict mode information is a powerful weapon; while in the cooperation mode information acts as an indispensible tool. In whichever mode information is used it is, in fact, the practical use of the results gained from the empathy component of communication. In other words, what is said between the lines in a press release is often more important than the actual press release itself.

In both the academic and practical fields of Community Development there is a great deal of emphasis on the processes of self help, organization and decision making. The problem is that nowhere in the models of Community Development is information, its acquisition or use considered to be a priority of specific concern or an integral part of the Community Development process of enabling people to gain more control over their lives. In all cases, the Community Development models reviewed by Curtis Mial in his article, "Models of Community Action, "whether defined as principles or steps, ignore information, its acquisition and use as a high priority or an integral part of the Community Development process (61; p. 12-23). Although Mial did not discover any universally appropriate model some common concerns were apparent, none of which related to information. These concerns include relating plans to the various personality, social and cultural systems in action and a need for an awareness of the process as well as the goals (61; p. 12-23).

Neighborhood information Centres, in and out of libraries, tend to ignore the issue in much the same way that Community Development does. Neighborhood Information Centres are defined as, "a service or services that help bring an individual into contact with resources that will satisfy his needs" (29; p. 127). On the surface this definition appears to deal with the question of information but, in fact, it does not. A study of these Neighborhood Information Centre services which include: steering, referring, advising, counselling, advocacy, follow-up, escort and case finding, indicates that just as in Community Development there is not sufficient appreciation of adequate and accurate information by all concerned.

The relationship of Byrd's statment about the power of information (see p. 1) and the supporting background material is tied to the Government Information

Division in the following manner. Since government at all levels has an omnipresent impact on peoples' lives, and is often one of the factors involved in the Community Development process, the information it releases in whatever format is valuable to community groups in that it provides excellent information on government thinking. The main goal of the Government Information Division in this setting is to make available government information more accessible to people so that they can use it as a community action resource to aid themselves as groups or individuals in their interaction with government, i.e. they can use the documents to gain empathy with government. This thesis makes no attempt to develop methods or mechanisms about how individuals and community groups can or have used this information to their advantage. Neither does this thesis address itself to the question of whether or not the Government Information Division is a neatly packaged vehicle for the dissemination of government propaganda, particularly to the unwary. Instead this thesis is a case study about how the Government Information Division is facilitating better public access to government information by providing the actual documents instead of pre-packaged press release and mass media versions of what the documents are about. The emphasis of this study is on the goals of the Government Information Division and the development of the Division around those goals.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis is an analysis and discussion of a case study, the development of the Government Information Division. The case study is related to existing theory and goes on to discuss current literature and thinking concerning access to government information and concludes with guidelines for the future.

The format of this thesis can be broken down into four basic steps. First, the current literature is reviewed. This review indicates three things: the relevance of the Division's work to Community Development, the relationship of the Division to libraries and the uniqueness of the Division in its manner of handling government information within libraries.

Second, the history of the Government Information Division is described. The emphasis in this presentation is upon the development of the Division's goals and the specific programs used to implement these.

Third, the present goals of the Division are evaluated in light of current research being carried out in government concerning the public's right to its information.

Finally, principles based on its own experience of the Division and guidelines for the future direction of the Division are proposed.

CHAPTER TWO: RELEVANCE TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND LIBRARIES

Community Development has been defined as "organized efforts of people to improve the conditions of community life and the capacity of the people for participation, self-direction and integrated efforts in community affairs" (40; p.140). In a chapter on "The Nature and Characteristics of Community Development" Dunham stresses that,

> Community Development involves an educational process. It is always concerned with people. If the sole or basic goal of a project is a new road, a school building, better homes, the use of fertilizer, or the like, it is a project in community improvement, and the project is properly the primary responsibility of the departments concerned with public works, education, housing, agriculture, etc. If the ultimate goal is not merely the concrete project but what happens to people while working toward their goal and as a result of its achievement, then the project is concerned with community development.... The educational element in community development is of basic importance.... Community development is basically democratic in its philosophy. Logically, it is tied up with such ideas as ultimate control by the people, a substantial degree of freedom by individuals and groups, a considerable amount of governmental decentralization, and widespread citizen participation" (40; p.173).

More recently Hynam has recorded what a group of delegates from six countries at the second (1974) International Conference on Community Development (53; p.2) unanimously considered to be six indispensable Community Development criteria. These are as follows:

1. Conscientisation (stimulating consciousness)
2. Education - motivation until the people concerned consider the undertaking as theirs
3. Participation in decision making
4. Emphasis on the whole community
5. Self help towards maximizing the use of indigenous resources
6. Creating effective linkages with external influences.

With regard to the first criterion mentioned above, Freire's concept of "conscientização" (51; p.61) is concerned with, "Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality (which) does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication" (51; p.64). In his later works Freire elaborates by explaining that conscientização represents the development of the awakening of critical awareness" (52; p. 19), and that "critical consciousness represents things and facts as they exist empirically, in their causal and circumstantial

correlations: (52; p. 44). The necessity for information in this process is obvious since the development of a critical consciousness involves the exchanging/changing of present information for new information. Education and participation in decision making would be meaningless without adequate information, just as linkages with external influences would be ineffective without adequate information about relevant external organizations and/or personalities.

Although Community Development has recognized but neglected the importance of authentic information as an important ingredient for social change (36; p. 185), public libraries are just beginning to see the linkage and are starting to verbalize their role in initiating change.

> "In 1943, Ralph Beats (later director of the New York Public Library) defined the public library's role in adult education as 'infusing authentic information into the thinking and decision-making of the community'. This is a concrete and librarian-like definition of the public library's role in community development as we have been provided. It is, however, community development as philosophy, as a method of social planning, and as an inspiring movement at local, regional and national levels that prompts public librarians to enact the strong, effective programs of 'information infusion' that have impact on the thinking and decision-making of the Community.
>
> Community development is oriented toward problem-solving, and thus breathes life into community study and purpose into community analysis. The problem-solving orientation provides a focus for data gathering, a clear guideline to categorizing and critically analyzing the data, and an absolute measure of the right amount of data. The problem-solving orientation of community development resolves most of the difficulties which community study has posed for novice librarians, and it provides the perfect framework for public libraries to participate as strong leaders and unique contributors in the process of planned social change.... The public librarian may play any of several roles in a community-wide action sytem: interpreter of community needs, channel to community resource, expert in planning and group process" (60; p. 497-8).

Public libraries use the Minimum Standards for Public Library Systems: 1966 as their criteria in determining the three means by which the library

becomes an integral part of the community. These criteria include: study of the community, participation of staff in the life of the community and the correlation of library programs with those of community groups (6; p. 34-5).

The types of library services which fall within these criteria are often referred to as "Neighborhood Information Centers" or "Information and Referral Services" (69; p. 350) in the United States. The two function of these centers are: "(1) linking people in need with the appropriate agency or service designed to eliminate or alleviate the need, and (2) assisting the long range community planning processes by discovering gaps, overlaps, and duplication in services" (69; p. 355). Information available from these centers includes the subject areas of: agency responsibilities, government in general, police, housing, employment, health, education, welfare, business, and consumer affairs (39; p. 1186). In Britain this work is carried out by the Citizen Advice Bureaus (CAB) (54; p. 350). In Canada the Advice, Information and Direction Services (AID) carry out most of the functions of these organizations which is, in both cases, the first function of the Neighborhood Information Centers in the United States i.e. linking people to services, however, they are not part of the library system.

On the other hand, the London Urban Resource Centre in London, Ontario, is exploring a new way in which information about community activities, issues, concerns and resources can be handled. This Centre, together with nine other groups, is located in a house owned by the London Public Library. As part of the Library "the Centre functions as a catalyst attempting to find out what information groups have, what information is needed, and how the two can be coordinated .... LURC (London Urban Resource Centre) accomplishes its goal in three ways: by providing physical resources, technical resources and information resources" (37; p. 175).

As can be seen from this brief description, some public libraries - particularly in the London case - are beginning to take a more active role in their communities as information specialists. However, it can be seen that government information is handled only peripherally by these centers. Thomas Childers, in discussing the political process in a survey of literature on the information poor in the United States, points out that:

> "While there is little empirical evidence about public knowledge of the political process, it is widely acknowledged that the general population has only limited access to and/or control of information related to local, state, and federal government and law enforcement. There is widespread ignorance of actions pending and actions taken, of the processes of legislation, administration, adjudication and law enforcement, of the distribution of power locally, nationally and in between, and of where to go to find out about these things.... The literature makes a strong plea for adequate downward communication. But it pleads even more urgently for two-way vertical communication - a continuing dialogue between the little man at the bottom and the complex, often insensitive governmental and law enforcement machinery at the top.... It appears that virtually every citizen lacks the information through which he could begin to control his destiny within the political process" (28; p. 71-3).

In a recent article entitled "Discovering the Government Documents Collection in Libraries", Catharine Reynolds, a documents librarian, attempts to lay to rest the old academic discussions related to government information and draw attention to the problem of the lack of public awareness to government documents:

> "Promoting greater library user awareness of the government documents collection is the goal of every depository library.
>
> Proponents of full cataloguing frequently imply that the absence of cards in the public catalog dooms documents to oblivion. The truth is that cataloguing is only one of many ways in which government publications can be brought to the attention of library users, since the combined efforts of a large staff can do no more than selective cataloguing of the enormous output of government offices. Whether or not government documents are fully catalogued, with or without subject analytics, and distributed throughout the library or maintained as a separate collection, it is important that every means possible be directed to publicizing the information riches contained in public documents" (68, p. 228).

Although no reference was made in this article to the application of the technique used by the Neighborhood Information Centers to government document collections one can see the potential for a unique experiment. The Government Information Division being described here is just such an experiment. As information specialists in government information, the Division applies the

information specialist techniques used by the Neighborhood Information Centres to facilitate a two-way flow of communication between citizens and all levels of government.

CHAPTER THREE: THE BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE.

INTRODUCTION

The Community Public Information Centre, an Opportunities for Youth project, was started in May 1973. The objectives of this Centre, as discussed hereunder, provide the guide for its work.

The Opportunities for Youth proposal was based on the need for citizens in Edmonton to have better access to municipal government information. This need was documented in a number of places. The January 1973 issue of the Alberta Planning Exchange (32; p. 20) listed access to government information as one of the five major problems in Edmonton. In addition this problem was also documented in the minutes of at least three community organizations in Edmonton - Edmonton Social Planning Council, Northeast Ratepayers Association and the League for the Promotion of Community Councils (33; p. 2). With this well documented problem in mind, the objectives of the Community Public Information Centre were established.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMUNITY PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE

The first objective was to improve citizen access to municipal public information. This was achieved by establishing the Community Public Information Centre within the premises of the Edmonton Public Library. It was felt that citizen access to local government information could be vastly improved by an information centre situated here. Politically the Edmonton Public Library is neutral (49; p. 1). It is centrally located in downtown Edmonton near City Hall. Systems and procedures are already established for lending material and the library maintains long hours of service. Here one can begin to recognize the "information is power" concept in its formative stages, a concept which is basic to its operation.

The second objective set out in the Community Public Information Centre proposal was to increase the relevancy of public information to the citizen's needs. To attain this objective the organizers felt they must contact a number of community groups and citizens to identify their local government information needs. This particular approach was taken after careful evaluation of city documents. It appeared to the members of the Centre that municipal information was one of two things: it was either extremely technical, full of charts, graphs and

figures incomprehensible to most people, or it was "public relations material" with very little information on which a citizen could base a decision. Thus by identifying community information needs it was believed that the staff of the Centre could acquire appropriate material and be able to lead confused citizens to the required information.

Third on the list of objectives was the intent to assist citizens and community organizations to improve their skills in acquiring and using public government information. The means for meeting this objective, it was felt, was to conduct a series of seminars and workshops on access and use of government material. The intent of this objective was to educate people how to relate effectively to government so that citizens could interact effectively with their government when their needs required it.

The fourth and final objective was to facilitate two-way flow of communication between citizens and their government. The method suggested to meet this objective was the establishment of a Communications Committee. The terms of reference of this committee were to explore ways to improve the two-way flow of communication between the City and citizens. Its membership was to include representatives from the community, city government, the news media and the Edmonton Public Library.

It is of interest to note the trends established in these objectives. One centered around the Edmonton Public Library being politically neutral in conflicts between citizens and government. In the proposal one of the advantages of establishing the Community Public Information Centre in the Edmonton Public Library was that a library is viewed as an unbiased source of information. Thus the Centre would not be viewed as an arm of City Hall and its policies. The objectives of the Centre outlined in the proposal also indicated that the organizers were not considering entering the political arena. The role of facilitation was emphasized clearly in the fourth objective where a communications committee is proposed to discuss the two-way flow of information and communication between citizens and City Hall. This committee was not only to be external to the Centre but also to have no means of direct access to City Hall i.e. it was to be an advisory body only. A second indication of the facilitator role can be seen in the third objective. This objective relates to teaching community people how to obtain

and use local government information. Here there is no mention of approaching City Hall to make its material more accessible or comprehensible for Community consumption. This appears to show an attitude that if citizens want to participate they will have to learn to understand the documents with the help of the Community Public Information Centre staff.

COMMITMENTS TO THE COMMUNITY PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE

Applications for Opportunities for Youth projects required letters of support from members of the community. The Community Public Information Centre organizers obtained seventeen such letters (see Appendix B). Support was received from community groups, local politicians, civic administrators and university professors. Of most significance to the project was a letter from Brian Dale, the Director of the Edmonton Public Library (38). This letter not only fully supported the project, it also stated that the Edmonton Public Library would cooperate fully with it, provide it free office space and furniture, and would consider taking over the project as part of the Library at the end of the summer when the Opportunities for Youth funding was discontinued.

Also of significant importance to the project were letters of intent from six senior members of the Civic Administration. These letters, besides supporting the project in principle, stated that municipal documents would be made available to the group. With these important letters of commitment and the widely based community support received in other letters the proposal was submitted to the Opportunities for Youth selection committee. The application was successful and the Community Public Information Centre project was officially underway on May 14, 1973.

STAFFING

The first organizers of the Community Public Information Centre proposal were graduate students in the Master of Arts Program in Community Development at the University of Alberta. These seven students had campaigned extensively in the Community and at City Hall, therefore enabling the project, once approved, to move ahead without delay. In addition two students graduating from the University of Alberta's School of Library Science were recruited to organize material for effective use by the community as soon as approval was granted.

OPERATION OF THE COMMUNITY PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE

Because there was such a short period of funding and a great deal to accomplish the staff initially decided to focus its attention primarily on one current issue, transportation. It was felt that by acquiring material and preparing an elaborate display on transporation the Centre could quickly establish its credibility as a reliable source of information on current civic issues.

After this initial thrust some of the staff set out to re-establish their earlier community contacts interviewing community groups in more depth and assessing more fully their information needs. Other staff members contacted various City Hall departments to acquire the necessary information and documents required to meet expressed needs. When this material arrived in the Centre it was classified and organized for use by the public. In addition a system was devised to index the City Council minutes for up-to-date ready reference. At the same time the staff maintained an inquiry desk during regular library hours.

RESULTS

In discussing the results of the Centre it must be remembered that the Public Library and City Hall are relatively inactive during the summer months. However, during this relatively inactive period the Community Public Information Centre had an average of sixty-five inquiries per week during June and July 1973. These municipal inquiries covered a wide range of topics including current research studies, departmental operations and the location of City services.

Under the Opportunities for Youth granting procedure the Centre was required to prepare an evaluation of its operation. The method used to conduct this evaluation was to record interviews with users on video tape. The Community Public Information Centre staff interviewed twelve community leaders, whose contacts put them in touch with a large cross section of citizens. Based on feedback they had received and after using the Centre they felt that the project had been a success. Interviews indicated that the Edmonton Public Library had been an ideal location and that the project had met a great need in the City.

It must be noted here that although the members of the community groups saw the Centre's operation as a success, the staff failed to meet two of its objectives as originally set out in its proposal. It did not achieve its third and fourth

objectives. During its existence the Centre did not conduct any seminars or workshops on the acquisition and use of local government information as stated in its third objective. The other objective not met related to the Communication Committee.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE COMMUNITY PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE EDMONTON PUBLIC LIBRARY.

THE PROPOSAL TO THE EDMONTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Following the progress reported, a proposal for establishing the Centre as an ongoing part of the Library was presented to the Library Board in late July (33). The proposal contained a history of the project to that point and defined the objectives of the proposed permanent division of the Library. These objectives were the same as those of the project in its original proposal to Opportunities for Youth. They were to improve citizen access to government information, to increase the relevancy of public information to the citizen, to improve citizen skills in getting and using government information, and to improve the two-way flow of communication between the citizen and government.

The proposed staffing for this continuation of the Centre was six members. This was a reduction of three from the Opportunities for Youth complement of nine. The proposed staff consisted of a librarian as supervisor, a public information officer to acquire material from City Hall, a community extension worker to work with community organizations and three clericals to handle inquiries and assist in the organization of material.

LIBRARY BOARD DECISION I

Three major alterations were made by the Library Administration in preparation for their recommendation to the Library Board. First, the name was changed from the Community Public Information Centre to the Government Information Division.

The second alteration related to a specific function. The Library Administration proposed that the Government Information Division be responsible for dissemination of information from all three levels of government with emphasis on the municipal level. This alteration was based on the fact that the existing government documents in the Library were receiving little attention from library staff and were, therefore, not being effectively utilized. Thus the Centre's proposal provided the Library Administration an opportunity to increase the use of

its entire government document section.

The third alteration to the proposal was a cut and re-arrangement of the proposed staff from six to four. The recommended staff was now a supervisor who would also be responsible for acquisition of material for the Division, a librarian responsible for the organization of material and two clericals (Library Assistants Class II) responsible for dealing with inquiries and displays.

The Library Board considered the Administration's revision of the Community Public Information Centre's proposal and approved it. i.e.that a Government Information Division be established with a staff of four responsible for information from the three levels of government.

THE CENTRE'S COUNTER PROPOSAL

Although the Centre's staff was pleased by the Library Board's approval of the continuation of the Centre as part of the Library, they felt that the recommendation was "somewhat deficient" (72). The reduction of staff from six to four eliminated the community extension worker which the Centre felt was to meet a critical need. Thus the staff wrote a second proposal to the Library Board recommending that the initial staff of the Government Information Division be at least five; this fifth staff member to be the community extension worker.

The justification for this counter proposal was based on the evaluation referred to earlier and a comparison with other local libraries' - specifically the Cameron and Legislature Libraries - government document sections. The Centre's staff felt that without the community extension worker the new Government Information Division would lose the community orientation that the Centre had built up during the summer. The importance of this community orientation had come out very strongly in the evaluation interviews. The importance of the community orientation became more apparent when the staff collected information about the use of government document sections in other local libraries. The library government document section looked into most closely was that of the Cameron Library at the University of Alberta. All of the Centre staff who attended the University of Alberta for at least two years with the exception of the librarians were hardly aware that the government document section even existed.

LIBRARY BOARD DECISION II

The results of the Centre's counter proposal were negative. The Library Board, in considering the counter proposal, decided that the need for a community extension worker was unwarranted. It was felt that the community extension worker would have difficulty remaining unbiased in his work with community groups and therefore he would jeopardize the image of an institution priding itself on its objectivity and impartiality.

The Library Board did, however, agree to hire a community oriented supervisor for the Government Information Division and include, as part of the job description, the responsibility of carrying on liaison work with community groups. Thus, although dissatisfied with the total outcome of their counter proposal the Centre staff felt that they had received some concessions from the Library Board on this principle of community orientation.

BUDGET APPROVAL

In addition to the Library Board's approval of the Government Information Division, budget approval had to be given by City Council. In order to continue the work of the Community Public Information Centre which had been taken over by the Library, the Library required an interim budget for the remainder of 1973. The proposal to City Council outlined the history and the proposed responsibility of the new Division and requested a $15,000 budget until the end of 1973 after which the Division would be included in the regular Library budget.

In addition to approving the concept and budget for the new Government Information Division, City Council requested a report at the end of 1974 on the effectiveness of the new Division. With this approval the Library was able to begin hiring permanent staff for the Division in September 1973. As well, the request for a report set the stage for a close look at the Government Information Division's objectives and its role in the Edmonton Public Library.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE NEW GOVERNMENT INFORMATION DIVISION

FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION - 1974

ORIENTATION TO THE EDMONTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

A first step taken by the Government Information Division was the hiring of staff and the purchase of equipment for operation. Although most of the Community Public Information Centre staff had gone their separate ways following the end of the 1973 summer, two of the staff remained and successfully applied for two positions in the new Division. The former information officer was hired by the Library Administration to supervise the Division. The other remaining staff member of the Centre, a librarian, was hired in the same librarian capacity. The carry over of these two staff members from the Community Public Information Centre project provided a bridge of continuity for the new Division giving it personnel fully familiar with the objectives the Library had in mind in creating the Division.

OBJECTIVES

A new specific objective was to provide criteria for the evaluation of the Division by City Council at the end of 1974. Other objectives were divided into two main categories - ongoing and annual. The ongoing objectives established by the Division were in essence long term goals. The annual objectives described how the Division was to meet its ongoing commitments in any particular year. The three major ongoing objectives of the Division were very similar to some of those proposed in the original Community Public Information Centre's proposal. Now they were generalized to include all three levels of government instead of just the municipal level.

The first objective was to make government documents and related public information available to the public in an accessible and informative manner. This objective generally covered the first two objectives of the Community Public Information Centre. These were to improve access to municipal information to citizen needs; the only two, of the original four goals that the Centre had been able to meet.

The second and third ongoing objectives of the Government Information Division were to provide publicity, programs and displays to enhance the effectiveness of the Division as well as to maintain a close working relationship with

Statistics Canada, the Bureau of Public Affairs, the City Clerk's Office, the City's Public Relations Department and the Planning Department.

In keeping with these objectives the Division then established its targets for 1974 and prepared statements of intent about them. It was anticipated that by the end of the year the Division would be fully operational internally, that is, all the basic aspects of service to the public would be implemented and tested. Two examples of targets were the establishment of pertinent and relevant collection and the conducting of information seminars on current local issues with publication of free information booklets on the proceedings for the general public.

With regard to the first target referred to above the Library stacks contained a great deal of outdated reports, statistical information and poorly organized material. Much work had to be done on this before the Division could become fully operational.

The second task, concerning seminars, provided tests of practicality. On two occasions the staff attempted to conduct seminars but, both attempts ended in failure. The first seminar the Division attempted to organize centered around the British Commonwealth Games Money Bylaw. This Bylaw was going to be put to a public vote to determine whether the City Council should pass or defeat the debenture Bylaw for the construction of facilities for the 1978 Commonwealth Games. The Division organized a seminar at which the pros and cons were to be debated. An able and popular person was engaged to moderate the meeting. In all the Division staff spent seventy hours organizing speakers and publicity for the seminar. As it happened, the last spring blizzard arrived the day of the seminar and only fifteen people attended. No proceedings were published due to the very poor attendance and as the voting was to take place shortly after the meeting was held there was not time enough to have a second try.

The Division chose property tax and assessment as the topic for the second seminar. It was decided that the complexity of the topic warranted a brochure with charts and graphs to be handed out at the door to aid people in following the discussion during the seminar. The development of this brochure involved approximately one hundred hours of interviews with the property tax personnel of both the City Assessors' Department and the Alberta Department of

Municipal Affairs. Much of the time was spent in an attempt to simplify complex procedures so that the brochure would be accurate and yet easily comprehensible to the average citizen. In addition to the cooperation received from the two levels of government in preparing this brochure, the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau agreed to do the layout for the Division at no cost. After several delays the printing was completed and the times, locations and speakers arranged. At this late stage the Minister of Municipal Affairs announced a major change in the property tax legislation. This change outdated the brochure and the speakers did not have time to study the implications of the new regulations before the scheduled dates of the seminars. As a result the entire program had to be cancelled.

In frustration the Government Information Division staff abandoned the whole concept of seminars as impractical. It was felt that far too much time was spent on organizing events over which the Division had minimal control. Thus, in an attempt to use their time more effectively, and hopefully reach more people, the Division turned to the community channel available through the cable television companies.

In mid 1974 the Division approached a local cable television company with a program format aimed at explaining the government to the people. The program was entitled "City in Focus". This weekly program consisted of half hour interviews with City Hall staff who had worked on major reports or were responsible for the explanation of controversial policies within the administration. Some of the more popular topics included were: zoning, property tax, rapid transit, truck routes and urban design. It was decided that the program would not have local politicians as guests to avoid it becoming a political arena where aldermen could campaign for the 1974 civic election. This program began in the fall of 1974 and continued through the spring of 1975. During that period the Division produced thirty programs.

In comparing the two types of programming, seminars and television, it was felt that "City in Focus" was far more successful for several reasons. First, programming on television permitted the Division to go to the people rather than the people having to come to the Division. Second, each television program required only five to seven hours to implement as compared to the seventy to one

hundred hours required for the seminars, thus saving the Division a great deal of staff time and expense. Although there was no accurate means available to measure the success of the program, the amount of feedback from people to the staff indicated that there was a considerable audience. Unfortunately no record was kept of the feedback consequently verification is impossible.

RESULTS

During 1974 the Division answered 5,240 inquiries. Forty-eight percent concerned the federal government, thirty-one percent the municipal and the remaining twenty-one percent the provincial government.

The Library Administration requested information concerning the length of time it took staff to answer questions. In order to supply this information the Division conducted a time study. This involved tabulating over a period of two weeks, the time it took to answer all inquiries. The time taken to answer all questions was averaged and it was found that it took approximately four minutes per question. Without a well trained staff, most questions would have undoubtedly required much longer.

In addition to the inquiries the Division dealt with, it also loaned six hundred and eighty-seven documents to the public an average of about fifty-seven loans per month. In this connection the Division never loaned a publication if only one was available. This was decided on because many government publications have extremely limited printing, and if material is lost by patrons, the chance of obtaining a duplicate is almost negligible. Although single copies were not loaned they could be made use of on the premises.

As well as working with the users of the Division, the staff were continually involved in updating the collection. In 1974 more than one thousand documents were added. To organize and prepare these publications for use, each item was processed through various stages, e.g. identification, cataloguing and shelving. It was estimated that 30 - 45 minutes was required to process each publication. Although the processing of the material was tedious and time consuming, one of the major benefits, aside from having a well organized collection, was that the staff were thoroughly familiar with the material.

Citizen access to information was facilitated by providing community groups with summaries of important reports and relevant recommendations

which appeared on the City Council agenda.

Thus the first year of the Government Information Division involved a process of grafting on additions to the existing Library procedures which resulted from aiming at implementing the objectives adopted from the Community Public Information Centre. By the end of the year most staff and patrons contacted felt that the Government Information Division was off to a successful start.

THE CRISIS

At the end of 1974, the Government Information Division as expected was evaluated by City Council to determine whether or not it should be continued. This evaluation took place during the budget preparation period for 1975.

As is usual in Edmonton's civic budgeting process, each department, of which the Library is one, prepares its budget estimates during the latter half of the year for the next year.

The budget of each division is completed by the end of August. The total budget for the Library is then compiled by the Library Administration.

In the civic election held on October 16, 1974, the City elected a new mayor. One of the campaign promises of the new mayor had been to reduce City spending. Since 1974 was a year of high inflation, the mayor and top civic administration agreed in early November that the 1975 budget should be no more than 15 percent higher than the 1974 budget. The Library budget was hit hard by this decision. The Library Administration felt that it could not continue all of its programs under these budget restraints.

Acting on pressure from the Civic Administration to maintain a budget of 1974 plus 15 percent, the charges from the same administration that the Government Information Division was overlapping with services provided by other departments, the Library Administration proposed a budget to the City Administration within the given limits but with the Government Information Division eliminated. The charges of overlap centered around the feeling that the Government Information Division was duplicating the information functions of some departments, in particular, the Planning Department and the Public Relations Department. In addition the Library Administration felt that as the Division had been the last program added to the Library structure it should be the first to be cut in this budget crisis.

This revised Library budget, without the Government Information Division was submitted by the required deadline to the City's Commission Board and accepted in early December prior to its approval by the Library Board.

The Library Board met and unanimously supported the retention of the Government Information Division for one more year and added other items amounting in total to $95,000 which had been cut by the Administration.

This support of the Government Information Division by the Library Board did not solve the budget problem for the Division. The Library budget still remained subject to the approval of the Economic Affairs Committee of Council and by City Council itself. In an attempt to justify its existence and comply with the original request of City Council, the Division prepared its Annual Report for 1974. The Division took great care in this report to show how it was not overlapping with services provided by other departments in the City. Significant here were the figures mentioned earlier which showed the percentage of inquiries received concerning the three levels of government. These figures showed that approximately half of the questions concerned the federal government, about one-third the municipal government, and the remainder, the provincial government.

It is impossible to determine how far these statistics influenced the City Council's final decision but the Library Board's entire budget request was eventually approved.

SECOND YEAR OF OPERATION - 1975

OBJECTIVES

Because the 1975 objectives were drawn up during the budget crisis, the objectives were directed chiefly towards maintenance of the Division. It was felt that any new innovations would not likely receive funding not only because of the budget crisis but also because the Library Board had recommended only one more year's operation before another thorough evaluation. The Division staff therefore felt it advisable to aim at consolidating its position by concentrating on improving and strengthening existing procedures. The only new addition to the program, therefore, was the production of fact sheets which had been agreed upon before the budget crisis began.

RESULTS

The results of the second year of operation were similar to those of the

first year. The Division was able to meet its official objectives of improving existing operations without much difficulty. In an attempt to ensure accurate information, detailed interviews were necessary with the resource people working in relevant government fields. Draft fact sheets had to be written. The draft was then taken back to the resource people to be checked for accuracy before printing and distribution. It was estimated that approximately seventy hours were spent in the preparation fo each fact sheet. Some of the more popular titles include: consumer price index, zoning, construction permits, letters and petitions to City Council. Although this was indeed time consuming the verbal responses from users of the fact sheets as to their helpfulness were very favorable.

With reference to the overall objective of justifying its existence, the Division made good use of the opportunity which became available when the Division had its turn to talk to the Library Board. This was in May 1975, shortly after City Council had approved the crisis budget.

A position paper (47) was presented. This paper re-emphasized the basic objectives of the Division, provided a rationale for them and showed how the activities of the Division aimed at fulfilling these objectives. The Division, however, did not request immediate approval of the position paper but only asked that it be received as information until the Division had the opportunity to send it to community groups for comment. In doing this the Division wanted to verify that the specified objectives were consistent with the needs of community groups before final approval from the Library Board was sought. The Board agreed to this approach and in early May the position paper was distributed to the community groups.

In making its presentation to the Library Board, the Division attempted to show that it was acting as an integral part of the three-way symbiotic relationship. The three parts of this relationship were described as government commitment to citizen involvement, relevance of accessible information, and sophistication of community input. The discussion attempted to show that there was a need for a well developed government information service only if there was government commitment to citizen participation and if the community wanted to have input into government. It was also shown that unless there was government commitment

there would probably be little accessible government information and minimal citizen participation. It was also agreed that unless there was sophisticated citizen input, the government commitment to making information available and involving citizens was of little value.

Another argument put forward was that this symbiotic relationship only moved as fast as the slowest integer, and that the Government Information Division could be a leader in the intricate process of facilitation.

The Division's major goal outlined in the paper was:

> "To facilitate citizen knowledge of and encourage participation in the Canadian democratic process through provision, in a library setting, of information on and related to the three levels of government" (47; p. 1).

It was pointed out that a very important part of this goal was to encourage people to participate in the government process once they were informed. It is here that the Division formalized the information on power concept discussed earlier.

From the goal referred to above the Division developed four broad ongoing program objectives. These were:

> "To make government documents and related information accessible to the public in a comprehensible manner.
>
> To maintain close working relationships with other related information giving and information-receiving agencies.
>
> To provide publicity, programs, models and displays to increase the effective dissemination of information.
>
> To plan and provide for the future developments in the Division necessary to meet the public's needs" (47; p. 1).

The result of the submission of the position paper to the community groups was that the Division's views as to its goals were fully supported. Another need, however, became evident. This was the need for the Division to be more visible in the community by providing more personal contact with the groups. The groups felt that being on the Division's mailing list was not enough. They wanted someone to come and talk with them individually about government information.

Unfortunately final Library Board approval was not obtained on the position paper before the end of 1975. Because the position paper was not distributed to

community groups until May, most groups waited until after the summer vacation period to respond to it. By that time the Library Board was spending the majority of its time on 1976 budget proposals.

Another part of the attempt by the Division to justify its existence centered around gaining depository status. The Library has for a number of years been a partial depository for the Federal government. During 1975 the Division was able to successfully negotiate for the Division to become a complete depository for all provincial documents. During the latter part of the year, the Division began negotiations with the City to become a complete depository for their documents. Up until this point the Division had only a verbal agreement with the City to receive their documents. The only means of finding out about new material was through reports in the newspaper. The Division staff then had to locate the appropriate department and request copies of the document.

Another task of the Division was to conduct an informal survey of the types of inquiries received concerning the Federal Government. The purpose of this survey was to determine whether the Division was or was not duplicating the service provided by the local Information Canada Enquiry office. To conduct this survey, the Division wrote down each question received that required Federal government answers for the month of June, 1975. The results of this survey, when discussed with the Information Canada staff, showed that there was very little overlap. The types of inquiries the Government Information Division received were of a different nature than those asked of Information Canada. The inquiries of the Government Information Division tended to be a research nature, while Information Canada received and answered questions on current programs which they sometimes referred to the appropriate government department. Both the Government Information Division and Information Canada received some questions about federal statutes. This was the only area in which there was some duplication.

As a result of this survey, the Government Information Division and Information Canada had a clearer understanding of each others' service areas. This led to improved cooperation and better service to the public because the staff of each center knew what questions to refer to the other.

URBAN DEMONSTRATION GRANT PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

In March 1974, the Minister of State for Urban Affairs, the Honorable Ron Basford, announced the creation of a $100 million dollar fund for Urban Demonstration Projects. This fund was intended to supplement budgets of existing programs for the initiation of projects which would find solutions to the many urban problems in Canada. These projects were to be the foundation for Canada's participation in the 1976 United Nations' Conference/Exposition on Human Settlements to be held in Vancouver in June. The Government Information Division, feeling that it qualified as a project eligible for funding under this program, submitted a proposal.

PROCESS

By the end of April the Division had prepared an outline of the proposal, and this completed outline was submitted to the Library Board at its May 9, 1974 meeting with a recommendation that it be approved. It was, and the outline was then submitted to the Commission Board of the City for its approval. The Government Information Division, the Police and the Social Services Department received approval to prepare proposals late in August, with the request that they be completed by the middle of September, 1974. The Division met the deadline.

In preparing this proposal the Division did not depart from its original objectives. The objective was to facilitate citizen awareness and feedback at the municipal level of government. Because the funding was directed especially towards urban projects, the Division was forced to emphasize the municipal level of government even though its mandate included all three levels of government.

The request for funding in this proposal centered around the means to be used to assist the Division in meeting its objectives. It was proposed that the Division be augmented by an audio-visual equipment bank, a community video studio, an urban studies collection and a meeting and work area. It was envisioned that the audio-visual equipment bank and community video studio would be used by community groups to document their activities, prepare proposals and briefs for City Council. It was hoped that an urban studies collection consisting of

non-government material would be another useful resource for community groups. Finally, the meeting and working area would be useful for community groups to conduct their business close to the material they required without disrupting other Library patrons.

RESULTS

Following submission of the proposal to Ottawa, there was a long delay. Word was received in late November 1974 that the review committee was interested. However, on July 3, 1975 the Honorable Barny Danson, Minister of Urban Affairs, announced that the entire Urban Demonstration Project program was being suspended as part of the Federal government's effort to restrain its spending.

Although the program and, as a result, the Government Information Division proposal, was suspended, the Division did make some progress. As mentioned above the Division has received the Library Board's approval of the proposal. This means that should funding ever become available the Division would be able to implement the proposal immediately.

CANADIAN COUNCIL ON URBAN AND REGIONAL RESEARCH (CCURR)

The Government Information Division has along with its other achievements become recognized at the national level as unique in the field of dissemination of government information to citizens. This national recognition is largely due to CCURR; this Council has long been emphasizing the need for improved access to information concerning all aspects of urban affairs.

The initial involvement with CCURR began in the latter part of 1974. The Division was invited to participate in "Urban Forum" a national conference sponsored by CCURR which was held in Ottawa in October 1974. The nature of the Division's input into the conference was to prepare and present one of six displays at the conference. The participants were asked to prepare a resume of their operations. These resumes were compiled and printed by the Council and distributed to all delegates attending the conference. The response to the Government Information Division's display was very encouraging. Delegates expressed the hope that a similar program could be established in their area. In response to this expressed need, CCURR planned a workshop to encourage other libraries to establish similar programs.

This workshop was preceded by an extensive planning session. In Toronto in April 1975, the Council brought together people from across the nation to develop a handbook for libraries and other agencies interested in setting up local urban information centers. The staff of the Government Information Division participated in this workshop along with fifteen other people who were either involved in or deeply concerned with the provision of local urban information to citizens. For two days these people shared both their good and bad experiences to provide the Council staff with the data necessary to prepare the handbook.

The handbook had been completed. The workshop was scheduled to coincide with the annual Canadian Library Association Conference and was held in the same hotel the day before the Conference began. It was felt that this would be the most appropriate time and place to hold such a workshop for two reasons. First, the few urban affairs information centres in existence are all parts of libraries and libraries appear to be the only institutions willing to take the initiative in this field. Second, the opportunity was available to discuss this subject at the least expense with the greatest number of libraries.

The Government Information Division was heavily involved in the workshop. The Division prepared a display of the ways in which it had made local government information more accessible to the public. The staff also participated in one of two panel discussions during the day-long workshop.

About two hundred people representing approximately one hundred and fifty libraries from across the country attended the workshop. The interest among the delegates and their concern that similar centers be established in their areas was very heartening to the Council and participants.

SUMMARY

This history of the Government Information Division has emphasized the development of its objectives over a period of approximately two and a half years. The Division began as an Opportunities for Youth project in May 1973 as the Community Public Information Centre. At the end of this four month funding period, the Centre applied to the Library for permanent funding. This proposal was accepted. The Library take-over of the project brought about several changes. Two of these changes included fewer staff members and the expansion of

responsibilities from only municipal government information to include the three levels of government. The first year was oriented towards the Division becoming part of the Library and establishing its procedures for the effective dissemination of information. One of the means discussed here was the development of the program "City in Focus". During the budgeting process for 1975 the Division went through a serious budget crisis. The crisis centered around the possibility of the Division being abolished. Following the survival of this crisis the Division proceeded during its second year to refine its operation and justify its existence. Also included in the history of the Division has been a description of the Division's proposal for additional funding submitted to the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs. As well there has been a discussion of the Division's involvement at the national level through the Canadian Council on Urban and Regional Research. Thus the history of the Division has been described showing the development of the Division with particular emphasis on the development of its objectives.

CHAPTER SIX:

RESEARCH CONCERNING ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will review the available literature about access to government information in Canada. In essence this is a review of governments' response to the problems of adequate access by citizens to government information outlined earlier. The literature is discussed in three parts. Each part reviews the documents and developments centering around the question of public access to government documents. Since this is a continuing discussion, the end of 1975 will be used as a cut-off date in the consideration of recent developments.

The first section deals with the Federal government's involvement in this matter. Considered in this section is a report by the Science Council of Canada, Information Canada, and the information presently before a joint committee of the House of Commons and the Senate. The second section deals with Alberta's involvement in the matter namely the Public Affairs Bureau and Bill 216. Finally Edmonton's involvement is considered. The first document to be dealt with is a draft of a brief which will be submitted to City Council by the Citizen's Action Committee. The second document is a draft policy statement presently before City Administration. Also investigated here are two reports concerning the City of Edmonton's Ad Hoc Committee on Citizen Participation.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

The Federal government has a history of being involved in research concerning access to government information. Although this research advocates the public's right to know, the disbanding of Information Canada raises serious questions about the consistency of the government's policies regarding the principles it has accepted.

SCIENCE COUNCIL OF CANADA

In 1971 the Science Council of Canada published its fourteenth report entitled Cities for Tomorrow. Although this report discussed several subjects including transportation and housing, the section most relevant to the present topic was a chapter called "Communications between Citizens and Government". As a result of the study, the following recommendation was made:

> "The different levels of government initiate the funding of an independent network of information bureaus. The functions of the bureaus will be to provide the citizen with access to required government programs, and to provide governments with feedback on the adequacy of government programs. The immediate objective is to establish a number of pilot projects in the five major regions of Canada, and the ultimate goal, a national network of information bureaus" (68; p. 11).

In connection with this recommendation the question of government-citizen communication was divided into four areas: general information, specific information, service and participation. General information was discussed in terms of the two-way flow between citizens and government. The Council envisioned agencies through which the government could advertise its programs to citizens and citizens could voice their opinions of the government.

With regard to specific information, the Science Council felt there was a specific need for coordinating among the three levels of government. To achieve this an information network would be necessary. The rationale for this network was that, "the public, as a consumer of necessary information, cannot be expected to wonder about the congeries of offices to seek out available information vital to its everyday needs" (68; p. 59).

Urban planners experienced that the dispersion of public service costs citizens both financially and socially. The Council saw government information centers grouped with other social services. It was believed that this grouping with other services would lead to greater social effectiveness, particularly for the citizen who uses it.

The fourth area of government and citizen communication was participation. The Council felt that the alienation caused by the complexity of government should be combatted. To accomplish this the Council believed that the minimum responsibility of the public authorities in the area of participation by citizens was to furnish them not only with good information and services that meet their needs, but also with an input structure that would encourage participation in all forms.

In summarizing how the Science Council arrived at its recommendations in these four areas the report stated:

> "the problem must be tackled from the point of view of the citizen, rather than that of the governments. To the citizen it matters little whether a service is provided by the federal, the provincial or the

> municipal level; he is, and has a right to be, interested in the service provided rather than who provides it" (68; p. 61).

INFORMATION CANADA

Although it was announced in late 1975 that Information Canada was to be disbanded, it is useful to examine documents related to its intent and operation to glean relevant lessons from this ill-fated agency. Information Canada was established following the report of the Task Force on Government Information in 1969 called to Know and Be Known. This report examined thoroughly the governments methods of keeping people informed and receiving feedback from the public. What was discovered was a situation with almost no consistent policy, even less coordination, and a great deal of duplication. The result of this report was two series of recommendations, dealing first with the policy, and second, with the proposed Information Canada.

This first series of recommendations not only outlined the procedures for the evaluation of government information policy, but also made a statement of principle. This frequently quoted principle stated that:

> "The right of Canadians to full, objective and timely information and the obligation of the State to provide such information about its programs and policies be publicly declared and stand as the foundation for the development of new government policies in this field" (26; p. 54).

By this recommendation the Task Force emphasized the right of the citizen to government information and the government's obligation to provide the relevant information.

The second series of recommendations dealt with the establishment of Information Canada. The purpose for establishing such an organization was to provide coordination and consistency to government information so that it would be effectively used. As well this agency was to bring the information to the citizens, answer their inquiries, and obtain feedback about government operations. Thus Information Canada was intended to be the government's method of keeping in touch with the grassroots concerns.

As a result of abolishing Information Canada in 1975, the government has, in effect, rejected these goals as part of government operation. The rejection of these goals must be kept in mind with regard to the following discussion of Bill C-225.

INFORMATION BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

The Standing Joint Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments (hereinafter called the Committee) was established in 1971 under the Statutory Instruments Act. Since the beginning of 1975 the Committee has been considering the accessibility of government documents. The documents under consideration include: Cabinet Directive No. 45, also known as "Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers": the Wall Report entitled "The Provision of Government Information": and Bill C-225, "An Act Respecting the Right of the Public to Information concerning the Public Business". These documents generally illustrate the two opposing perspectives the government is facing regarding public information. Although both sides agree more government information should be made public, the two sides differ as where to start on the continuum. One side starts from the point of view that before guidelines can be established about what will be public, one must first define what will be restricted and confidential. The other side begins by defining what information will be public. Both sides agree that there should be more public government information but disagree as to where this stops and confidentiality begins. The question about the Committee is one of how rigid or flexible the final proposed guidelines are going to be. The more flexible the guidelines, the more judgement will be exercised. The experience in the past has shown that this judgement tends to be conservative and as a result, less government information is available to the public. Thus the controversy rages on with little likelihood of being settled in the near future.

CABINET DIRECTIVE NO. 45

Cabinet Directive No. 45 entitled "Notices of Motion for the Production of Papers" was tabled in the House of Commons in March 1973 by the Honorable Allen McEachen, then President of the Privy Council. The document was then referred to the Committee for its consideration and recommendations. When discussed by the Committee in early 1975, the Honorable Mitchel Sharp, current President of the Privy Council, appeared as a witness before the Committee.

Although this Directive relates specifically to requests for information by Members of Parliament, Mr. Sharp made it clear that it was also being used as a guideline for the release of information to the public and press as well. This

document represented the position of those mentioned above who discuss public information by beginning on the security end of the continuum.

The arguments used to oppose this document are many and complex. Two major points are apparent and emerge throughout the proceedings of the Committee. The first point is based on the old cliche which is agreed on by both sides in this controversy. It states, "to be governed is to be informed, to be well governed is to be well informed". This was restated by the Honorable Dr. Mark McGuigan, one of the original members of the Committee when he wrote, "In political matters knowledge is the beginning of power, and its lack, impotence" (17; p. 14). In discussing this point, this side, composed primarily of opposition members, was quick to point out that without full disclosure they were impotent to fulfill their function as opposition. Being uninformed they could not carry out their role in the governing of the country.

This leads to the second point. The security oriented side, primarily made up of the government, countered with the general principle of the Directive:

> "To enable Members of Parliament to secure factual information about the operations of government to carry out their parliamentary duties and to make public as much factual information as possible consistent with effective administration, the protection of the security of the state, rights to privacy and other such matters, government papers, documents and consultant reports should be produced on Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers unless falling within the categories outlined below in which case an exemption is to be claimed from production" (13; p. 28).

This then leads to the consideration of how much privacy is needed by government for "effective administration". The full disclosure side believed that very little could not be made public. In support of this argument two suggestions were made, namely, to make reports into two volumes, one with facts and analysis and the other with recommendations and keep only the recommendations confidential, or to delete confidential portions from reports and make the rest of the report available.

The security oriented side then pointed to Exemption #7 and #16. Exemption #7 included, "Papers of a voluminous character or which would require an inordinate cost or length of time to prepare:, and Exemption #16, "Papers requested, submitted or received in confidence by the government from sources

outside the government" (13; p. 28). This, however, does not solve the problem but only makes matters worse since a majority of factual documents are received in confidence or cost too much to prepare for the public. As well, the disclosure side felt that there was far too much latitude for judgement and therefore too much opportunity for the government to cover up mistakes and to keep both the opposition and public uninformed. They also went on to point out that these documents should be made available after the decision making process was completed so that the public could draw its own conclusions.

BILL C-225

A major attempt to resolve this dilema has been in the form of Bill C-225, which is also before the Committee at this time (9).

Bill C-225, entitled "An Act Respecting the Right of the Public to Information concerning the Public Business" is commonly known as "The Right to Information Act". This Bill was tabled in the House of Commons on October 15, 1974 by the Honorable G.W. (Jed) Baldwin (P.C. Peace River, Alberta). This Bill was referred to the Committee in December 1974.

In his Bill, Mr. Baldwin attempted to propose a compromise to both sides. He proposed an alternate set of guidelines regarding what was to be confidential information and a method of resolving whether the documents should be public information.

Mr. Baldwin, when appearing as a witness before the Committee, attempted to show how the Bill he sponsored would be more effective than the government's Cabinet Directive. To do this he first quoted the Honorable John Turner and Prime Minister Pierre E. Trudeau. Mr. Turner, then Minister of Justice, was quoted the same year as saying in part:

> "In other words, government secrecy is sometimes legitimated as the need for the government's right to privacy, but which may well be a denial of the public right to know. What is necessary, then is a freedom of information act entitling the individual to information which the government authority has arbitrarily seen fit to withhold" (17; p. 11).

Prime Minister Trudeau was quoted from a press release in 1970 as saying, "If ours is to be participatory process, a primary requisite is a well-informed citizen and a communicative parliament and government" (17; p. 11).

Secondly he gave examples of where he felt the government had misinterpreted the Cabinet Directive since it had been tabled in the House of Commons. Approximately fifteen examples were given. These examples covered a majority of the exemptions in the Cabinet Directive. All of these examples were requested for information which fall into questionable areas.

Having used these items as the basis, Mr. Baldwin conceded that the exemptions in his Bill were more obscure than those in the Cabinet Directive. He reasoned that the exceptions as to what is public information are not, in reality, where the problem lies. Instead, he indicated that the real problem was with grey areas dealing with exceptions under certain circumstances. To solve this problem, Mr. Baldwin proposed in his Bill that the disputes over whether information in the grey areas should be released or not should be decided by a judge.

The Bill has not, however, resolved the argument between the security and disclosure people. In fact, the proposed Act adds more fire to the controversy, at the center of which are two related questions. First, should background documents of factual information be released as public information after the decision making process, primarily Cabinet's, is completed? If they should be available to the public, who should decide which areas and how much should be made public within the exemption guidelines? The security oriented people felt that the Minister responsible should have the discretionary powers in this matter, since the Minister is held responsible for his department, thus holding fast to the stand that the Cabinet Directive could be made workable. The disclosure people on the other hand agreed with Mr. Baldwin's proposed Bill. They felt the matter should be dealt with in court and, at the very least, by a quasi legal person or tribunal with some legal backing. The purpose for this, they felt, was that this court would, by its decisions, build up precedence over a period of time which would, in fact, act as the means of interpreting the exceptions to public information.

The security people countered this argument by stating that it would be unwise to bring the judiciary branch of government into the political process. In support of this argument, the Wall Report was cited as providing a viable alternative to the Right of Information Act. In particular it suggested that the courts be used to

interpret the questionable areas within the exemption guidelines.

WALL REPORT

The Wall Report, formally entitled "The Provision of Government Information", was prepared by Mr. Wall who was then Assistant Secretary of the Cabinet for Security Matters. The report was compiled during late 1973 and early 1974 and presented to the Privy Council in April 1974. Its primary purpose was to study the means by which the exemptions listed in the Cabinet Directive No. 45 could be applied both fairly and consistently.

Two important points in this report were used to support the argument of the security oriented people.

> "He comes to the conclusion that there is no need for specific legislation on the provision of information. He thinks that what is required is a clearer understanding of the obligation of government to inform, and a clearer understanding about informing" (18; p. 12).

The people favoring disclosure found that the Privy Council, since receiving the report, have been unable to successfully implement the recommendations of the Wall Report, in particular, how to apply fairly and consistently the exemptions listed in Cabinet Directive No. 45. Primarily, these recommendations were proposed as a restricted version of the classification scheme developed for security documents during the Second World War.

The second point brought out in the report related to the whole questionable area regarding Cabinet documents. It stated that the:

> "suggestions that while all documents related to Cabinet should remain as they are now - excluded from access - that there should be, as part of the development of Cabinet documents, an attempt to develop what he calls a plain-language summary of facts and analysis, the background facts, for any given policy. He thinks this could add considerably to the information that could flow from the government process and about government programs and decisions" (18; p. 12).

It is interesting to note that the suggestion here of producing plain language summaries is different from the wishes of the disclosure people who want the actual facts and analysis. These statements are particularly intriguing in the light of statements made in the actual report. In a section on the coloration and credibility of government information the report states:

> "There appeared to be some confusion, and occasionally some conflict, concerning the separate but related government obligations 'to inform' and 'to persuade' between the concepts of 'information' and 'propaganda'. The common practice seemed to be to draw a rough line between the two, and proceed on the basis that the former belonged to officials (non-partisan) and the latter to Ministers and their staffs (partisan). In fact, it is by no means that simple. The most telling point that was made, however (and it was made by many), was that nothing is as persuasive or as informative as a combination of clarity, objectivity, simplicity and pertinence. These qualities were often found lacking in governmental statements, press releases, speeches, pamphlets, inserts and so on, sometimes to the extent that credibility was seriously strained, and the objective lost" (18; p. 40).

It would seem that because there are so many problems in reworking facts and analysis, the government would be in a much better position if it would make public the actual reports.

CONCLUSION

Both being committed to the concept that more government information should be made public, the two opposing sides continue to debate and negotiate. The side consisting primarily of government members, contends that whatever is not confidential should be public information. The other side, supported basically by the opposition, insists that everything should be public except that which is confidential. The significant point of difference regards supporting material used by Cabinet in its decision making, and the means by which disputes over the release of documents will be settled. Both sides have provided support material for their cases. In addition to the documentation discussed above, the Committee has examined, the both sides have attempted to use the freedom of information acts of Sweden and the United States to their advantage. The results of these attempts have not been successful by either side because the difference in governmental systems does not allow direct comparison.

The debate continues. The only decision the Committee has been able to reach is that the, "Committee approves the principle the concept of legislation relating to the freedom of information" (11; p. 943). In spite of this decision there is little possibility of any major development in the near future.

ALBERTA'S INVOLVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Province of Alberta has done very little in comparison with the Federal government in the field of public access to government information. In 1972, the Province established the Public Affairs Bureau. As well, the Legislative Assembly had placed before it "The Right to Information Act" in 1975. The proposed Act will be compared to Bill C-225 which was previously discussed.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS BUREAU

The responsibilities of the Public Affairs Bureau are derived from a number of sources. These sources include Arts, Orders-in-Council and Treasury Board minutes and policy statements. The original Order-in-Council which established the Bureau is the most important of these. The emphasis of the Order-in-Council is upon public relations, advertising and information services for the province, and printing and publishing for government departments. Additional to the original source of responsibility, there are three statements related to audio-visual equipment. One concerns the printing of government material for the government, and the other concerns the coordination of Alberta's visual identity program. From these sources the Bureau sees itself as having three types of responsibilities, namely, control and service and the coordination of these.

The preamble of the Bureau's objectives is interesting. It states that, based on the documents defining the Bureau's responsibility, the Bureau operates on the premise that, "people have the right to know and government has the duty to inform" (3; p. 3). Of note in this preamble is the fact that the Bureau recognizes the right of citizens to have access to government information. Unfortunately the Public Affairs Bureau is an attempt to combine public relations and information services similar to the ill-fated Information Canada.

Only two of the ten objectives of the Public Affairs Bureau refer to the question of access to government information. The first objective consists of several tasks. It states that the objective of the Bureau is:

> "To propose communications policy; to devise and institute ways in which the people of Alberta have simple and easy access to all information generated by government; to facilitate expression of public opinion and its evaluation; and to make sure that government activities are open for all to see and examine" (3; p. 4).

Secondly, the Bureau intends, "to increase citizen awareness and understanding of the activities of government and the issues before government" (3; p. 4). It can be seen that these objectives reflect the premise of the Bureau as stated previously; the right of citizens to information and the duty of government to inform.

To adequately understand the attitude of the government behind these objectives one must examine the programs which have been instituted by the Bureau in an attempt to meet these objectives. One of the first information programs instituted by the Bureau was to set up a subscription service for all press releases and major statements made by the political figures within the government. This subscription was sold at a substantial fee to anyone who wished to keep informed about Provincial government activites.

A second major program was also launched during the early operation of the Bureau. In its early stages the program began as a telephone referral service. For example, an individual in Edmonton could call a toll free number in the Calgary government offices. The individual would then ask his question of the person in Calgary. This party in Calgary would telephone the appropriate government department and get the answer to the question. He would then call the individual in Edmonton and repeat the answer he had received from that department. In 1975 this service was improved upon and became known as the RITE system - Regional Information Telephone Enquiry. Under this new system anyone anywhere in the province can telephone one number free of charge and be referred to the appropriate government department.

Finally, the third major program of the Bureau was to designate certain libraries as depositories for public government information of which the Government Information Division is one. This program was established in 1975.

These, then, are the means by which the Public Affairs Bureau has attempted to meet the two objectives dealing with public information. Although these are not revoluntionary innovations, they are at least a step in the right direction, towards the freedom of information. Unfortunately the Bureau has not settled the problem of when and what government information will be released as outlined in the Bureau's objectives. The need for a policy on this problem is evident by the fact that a right to information act was tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

BILL 216

Bill 216, entitled, "The Right to Information Act" was tabled by Mr. Grant Notley (NDP, Spirit River - Fairview) in the spring sitting of the Legislative Assembly in 1975.

Although the similar bill in the federal level (C-225) was referred to a Committee, this is not possible at the Provincial level. The Provincial government seldom operates with any special committees. Therefore, any debate concerning the merits of this Bill must be made in the Legislative Assembly during the process each bill must go through before being enacted or defeated. By the end of 1975 the Bill had been tabled and received first reading. This process does not permit any discussion at this time so that any debate would have to come at some future time.

In examining both Bill 216 and the Federal Bill C-225, it can be found that they are very similar. Both proposed Acts begin by providing the definitions necessary for the understanding of this legislation. In each case definitions are provided for the words "Public Business" and "record". The next section of each Bill states that residents have the right to records of public business. This is followed by a section which outlines certain exceptions which are the only basis upon which denial of information can be made. The remaining sections of both Bills prescribe the type of judicial proceeding that will be held if the government denies a request for information, or if it takes unreasonably long (not defined) in complying with a request for information. Under these proceedings there is no appeal of the judge's decision and there are no costs or fees. The court order to produce the requested documents is formally served and the government must appoint a Minister or some other public official to answer for the government. The judge will then review the sealed particulars and decide whether the information should be made public. If he decides it should be made public and the government continues to refuse, the government representative is liable to conviction and imprisonment for up to five years. This the essence of both Bills and their similarities.

Each Bill, by necessity refers to its own jurisdiction. For example, the Federal Bill has an additional exception, not included in the Provincial Bill referr-

ing to national security. The other difference between these Bills is that the Federal Bill has a preamble. This preamble states that: "The people of Canada have a political right to be informed by their government concerning the public business, that they may protect and preserve the democratic principles and practices of the Constitution" (9; p. 1). The reference to the constitution aiso falls within the Federal jurisdiction. Therefore the only real difference between the two Bills relates to their respective jurisdiction.

THE CITY OF EDMONTON'S INVOLVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

More recently than the Province the City of Edmonton has become involved in the question of public access to documents. All the materials discussed here are indraft form and therefore only the proposals by the Citizen's Action Committee, for a freedom of information bylaw, the draft policy prepared by the Government Information Division concerning its acquisition of depository status for City documents, and recommendations by the Ad Hoc Committee on Citizen Participation of the City, along with the Civic Administration's report on implementing the recommendations.

CITIZEN'S ACTION COMMITTEE PROPOSAL

The brief being prepared by the Citizen's Action Committee calls for a freedom of information bylaw. The proposal uses the same arguments as those at the Federal level before the Joint Standing Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments by the people supporting full disclosure of government information. However, instead of proposing an actual freedom of information bylaw, the brief makes one major recommendation to the City Council as to how it can develop and implement a workable bylaw of this nature. This recommendation is that City Council establish a new commission to study and prepare such a bylaw. The Citizen's Action Committee brief then goes on to outline the terms of reference for this new commission.

These proposed terms of reference consist of items which can be classified as either procedures concerning information or the administration of the concepts described in the procedures. The procedural items include: the study of which information must be made available through information services, informa-

tion which is restricted and information available from departments upon request. The second part of these procedural items proposes the study of the feasibility of expanding the City Clerk's office. The rationale behind this study was that the City Clerk's Office could act as a funnel between the civic departments and the Government Information Division in the Edmonton Public Library. In this situation, the Government Information Division, in turn, would act as the organizer and disseminator of this anticipated increase in the flow of public information.

The administrative items in the terms of reference include the study of how information should be requested, the length of delays permissible, the process of appeal, who will be held responsible for withholding information, the penalties for withholding information, the right of individuals to their own personnel files, the costs and the best method of implementing the freedom of information bylaw.

Thus it can be seen from this draft brief that the Edmonton City Council will be presented with a proposal which carries forward within it the same principles as those presently before the senior levels of government.

DRAFT POLICY

The Government Information Division's only means of obtaining City documents is through the City Council agenda. As a result of receiving agendas without some major reports, the Library Administration requested that the Civic Administration give depository status to the Government Information Division. The Civic Administration, in return, asked that the Library draft a policy for Commission Board approval. As a result of this correspondence a policy statement was drafted and submitted to the Commission Board (46).

The draft policy states that the Government Information Division be the official depository for City documents. In order to keep the Division from becoming a large waste disposal unit for all City paper, the Division specified the types of documents that would be suitable for deposit. These documents include copies of all material which goes before City Council, as well as the minutes of all boards, commissions, and committees of the City. Copies of all major administrative reports and bylaws are to be deposited in the Government Information Division.

In looking closer at the policy it can be seen that there is some relationship between this policy draft and the Bills proposed at the Federal and Provincial levels of government. This relationship comes from the fact that the policy statement uses both the definitions used in the two Bills. These two definitions are for the terms "public business" and "record". The purpose of borrowing these terms and their definitions are that they are broad and all inclusive. Thus should the City Administration accept this policy draft, it would be taking a stand for full disclosure of information about its operation of the municipal level of government.

The procedures for this policy also outline the responsibilities of the Government Information Division as the depository, and each depositing agency. Each depositor is required to assign someone to send appropriate documents to the Government Information Division within one week of the documents' approval. This method of assigning the responsibility for sending documents was felt to be the most effective since it would establish an official contact for the Division in each area.

As a depository, the Government Information Division of the Edmonton Public Library, would be held responsible for several procedures in this policy. Of prime importance they would be responsible for making the material it received accessible to the public. Also it would ensure that all major reports be sent to MicroMedia Ltd. for microfiching and inclusion in the Profile Index. Finally the Division would be responsible for sending all outdated material to the City Archives.

Thus the proposed policy presented to the Civic Administration by the Government Information Division attempted to do two things. First, it attempted to give the Government Information Division depository status for City documents. This status it already has with both the Federal and Provincial governments. Second, the statement tried to establish, to some extent, the principle of open government by using the two major definitions from the Bills before the senior levels of government.

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Permission to establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Citizen Participation was given to City Council following a recommendation by its Public Affairs Committee in 1973. In early 1974 the membership of this Committee was approved.

Of the nine members appointed to this Committee, five were from the Civic Administration and four from various community groups throughout the City.

The Committee met for more than a year before making any recommendations. The Committee identified the major issues by means of a survey of departmental policies on participation and solicited comments from the public. This survey led to the identification of four major problems concerning citizen participation. The four major issues identified were:

1. No convenient access to relevant information,
2. Lack of meaningful, legally-structured mechanisms for citizen Participation,
3. Inadequate financial and technical resources for communities,
4. Fragmented definitions of communities.

Simultaneous to the identification of these issues the Committee also developed a working definition of citizen participation. This definition was:

> "Citizen participation is a democratic, systematic process which provides opportunities for communication between individual members of the public, their elected representatives, planners, interest groups and members of relevant agencies or departments, in order to arrive at informed decisions, responsive to the needs of citizens" (43; p. 3).

Using both the problem areas and the definition of citizen participation the Committee then developed a set of six principles. These principles indicated what the Committee wanted their recommendations to accomplish. These principles stated that:

> "The plans, policies and programs for citizen participation should:
>
> 1. create more opportunities for participation and not restrict or limit them to a few selected citizens or citizen groups,
> 2. include process and flexibility as well as structure and uniformity involving the public in the planning and decision making process,
> 3. emphasize mutual learning, involvement and cooperation of the public, professionals, elected representatives and interest groups (e.g. developers) rather than confrontation between these groups,
> 4. increase the flow of communication and information,

5. increase the clear and direct access to all stages of decision making in such a way that strengthens the political process,

6. the degree of decentralization in decision making should be related to the significance of the decision" (43; p. 3-4).

Based upon this material the Committee made four recommendations to Edmonton City Council. These recommendations were that Council:

1. "Provide more convenient access and timely distribution of relevant information to the public.

2. Improve the structure and increase the opportunities for constructive citizen participation.

   The Committee rejected proposals for creating or imposing a new structure for citizen participation.

   The Committee considers that the existing structures have the potential to serve this purpose.

3. Provide assistance to citizen and community groups.

4. Authorize sufficient funding and authority to the administration to implement the recommendations of this Committee" (43; p.1).

City Council, in considering these recommendations early in 1975, referred them to the Commissioners for a report of their feasibility, and possibility of implementation. As a result of this move by City Council, the City Administration's report was not available until late in 1975.

Along with each recommendation the Committee had listed several mechanisms as means by which each recommendation could be implemented. It was on the feasibility of these mechanisms that the Civic Administration reported to City Council. The first recommendation concerned access to information. Two of the mechanisms the Committee had suggested were preparing a policy giving citizens adequate time to prepare feedback, and popularized versions of studies so that the material in the reports could be understood by the citizens. In response to these mechanisms the Administration recommended that discussion papers be prepared for all major studies. These papers would allow public input in the development of City programs at the proposal stage and would indicate by when and to whom people must respond if they wished to have input into the study.

The third mechanism under this recommendation that the Committee suggested was a weekly calendar of public meetings published by the Edmonton Journal. The Administration felt that this had already been implemented through "Edmonton Notice", a column published in the Thursday paper.

The fourth mechanism suggested by the Committee was a re-assessment of the Public Relations Department so that it could assist other departments in carrying out effective citizen participation programs. The Administration felt that with its re-organization of the Public Relations Department in 1975 the purpose of this mechanism had been met.

The final mechanism for the first recommendation suggested: "that the Government Information Division of the Public Library be re-assessed with the objective of establishing its relevance as a vehicle for disseminating public information" (43; p. 6). The Civic Administration felt that the Division could meet the requirements of this mechanism by working more closely with the ten branch libraries and by publicizing it occasionally in the "Edmonton Notice" discussed above.

The second recommendation called for an improved structure and increased opportunities for citizen participation. The Committee in making this recommendation, also suggested mechanisms as they had done with the first recommendation. The first mechanism suggested the minimizing of special purpose boards and instead use of ad hoc committees or task forces whose terms of reference would include citizen participation. The City Administration's comment was that Council had approved such a policy in 1974.

The second mechanism suggested was that citizen input be encouraged in events leading up to long range capital programming. The City felt that the discussion paper concept could be easily adapted to implement this mechanism.

The third and fourth mechanisms were that the inter-relationship between community organizations and the social service delivery system be studied and that the City develop uniform boundary systems. The City felt these concerns were dealt with by the report of the Task Force on Human Service Delivery Systems and Citizen Involvement.

The final two recommendations and their mechanisms were dealt with by

the City together. These recommendations concerned City assistance to community groups. The type of assistance specified in the mechanisms included both financial and technical assistance to groups. In response to these recommendations the City proposed to implement a small fund to be used as seed money for citizen participation groups. This fund was to be controlled by the Public Relations Department.

City Council, in considering this Report from the City Administration, decided that their wisest move was to refer this Report back to the Ad Hoc Committee on Citizen Participation to get their reactions. At present this is where the matter lies.

SUMMARY

As can be seen there is a close relationship between the research and development taking place at all three levels of government. Each level of government is presently considering ways to insure that citizens can, and will have access to public government information. At the Federal and Provincial levels there are proposed Acts which have received first reading. At the municipal level there is the brief being drawn up. Each is trying to get the right to know concept accepted as a principle within government.

Thus it can be said that government, in general, is considering the question of the public's right to know about its operations.

CHAPTER SEVEN: GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to bring together the problem as outlined earlier, the government research concerning access to government information and the objectives of the Government Information Division in the form of specific guidelines which may direct the Division's future action. The format used here will be to propose a guideline, suggest methods for its implementation and follow these up with a justification of the guideline. Of secondary importance here will be general guidelines drawn from the past performance of the Division. It may be helpful here to repeat the objective of the Division as stated in its position paper:

> "To facilitate citizen knowledge of and encourage participation in the Canadian democratic process through the provision in a Library setting of information on and related to the three levels of government" (47; p. 1).

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE ACTION

GUIDLINE 1. That the Government Information Division strengthen and widen its role as a local access point for Federal government information.

METHODS:

a. Arranging with Ottawa based and local branch of Federal government departments to obtain on a continuing basis free information such as brochures and pamphlets not available through the Publishing Directorate.

b. Establishing direct contact with departments in Ottawa to enable the Division to use them as reference backup to the Division's collection.

c. Establishing special arrangment with the Publishing Directorate for faster delivery of publications handled by that office.

d. Advertising to local, Federal government department and the public that the Government Information Division has the facilities to accept a wide range of inquiries about the Federal government.

DISCUSSION

This guideline stems from the recent elimination of Information Canada and the closing of their local inquiry center. The immediate effect of this decision has been to cut off the public's main point of access for acquiring current Federal government information. The division can accept the challenge of this guideline by broadening the implementation of its objective and moving more comprehensively into the field of information about the Federal government; not only maintaining its present research information aspect but also extending its horizon to include detailed information about Federal government activities.

GUIDELINE 2. That the Government Information Division take a more active role in disseminating local government information.

METHODS:

a. Assisting branch libraries in the maintenance of small current government information collections.

b. Training brach library staff in the use of current government information.

c. Assisting the City in the effective use of its proposed discussion papers.

d. Assisting community groups in research and current awareness.

DISCUSSION

This guideline results from two documents discussed in the previous chapter, the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Citizen Participation and the Draft Policy proposed by the Division.

If approval of these reports is forthcoming the Division must be prepared to act immediately to assist the public in showing the City the wisdom of its actions in keeping the public informed.

As can be seen from the Division's objective this guideline is not a proposal for a new or alternate direction for the Division. Instead it is an encouragement for the Division to continue in this direction and proposes only sequential growth in an already important aspect of its operation. The more general implications of this discussion are considered in the following guideline.

GUIDELINE 3. That the Government Information Division actively support legislation at all levels of government which will enhance the concept that the public has a right to know about government activities.

METHODS: a. Submitting a brief to the Joint Standing Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments supporting Bill C-225.

b. Submitting a brief to the Provincial government which supports Bill 216.

c. Supporting the draft report that proposes a freedom of information bylaw when it is submitted to City Council.

DISCUSSION

This guideline comes within the scope of the Division's objective in the sense that in order to provide citizens with knowledge about government it must be able to acquire the appropriate material. However, one must also consider whether the Division can, in the name of an institution which prides itself as an objective source of information, actively lobby for permissive legislation. In the mind of the author the answer is an unqualified "yes", as is shown by a substantial history of precedents of North American libraries and library associations lobbying on such topics. Two recent examples should provide sufficient supporting evidence, e.g. 1. In 1974 the Director of the Edmonton Public Library, Brian Dale, testified on a censorship case in court supporting the retention of the book Joy of Sex by Alex Comfort, in the local bookstores (2). 2. A statement that

appeared in the winter 1975 issue of Agora, the newsletter of the special libraries and information services division of the Canadian Library Association, consisting of a request for submissions about Bill C-225 which will be amalgamated into a brief representing the association and sent to the Committee (73).

These two examples not only support the guideline, but the censorship case provides leadership from the Division's own Library Director. Thus there is a relationship between the objective provision of information to the public and advocating the free flow of information from government.

GUIDELINE 4. That the Government Information Division work towards the permanent development of networks with other information centers.

METHODS: a. Continuing close liaison with community information centers to enable the immediate transfer of current information.

b. Initiating a close working relationship with government document libraries throughout the province with a view of developing formalized channels for the flow of information.

c. Working closely with the information centers brought together by the Canadian Council on Urban and Regional Research for the exchange of information and ideas.

DISCUSSION

This guideline arises primarily out of the work done by the Science Council of Canada. It is supplemented also by the need for cooperation between centers suffering from present budget restraints.

The Science Council, in making its recommendation, stressed that due to the rapid urbanization process, i.e. the rural/urban population shift, and the breakdown of communication between government and citizens, e.g. the disbanding of Information Canada, information exchange networks are vital to the two-way flow of communication in our society.

Further incentives are added to this guideline by the fact that governments at all levels are attempting to curb their spending. These budget restraints have already caused the closure of Information Canada and seriously threatened the existence of other information centers and their ability to acquire material from government.

Finally, the value of a cooperative network is important from a morale building standpoint. Although there is no center comparable with the Government

Information Division in Canada, the support from centers with at least an urban focus gained through the Division's work with the Canadian Council on Urban and Regional Research was most rewarding, particularly during the Division's budget crisis.

Because centers such as the Government Information Division are innovative and costly, in terms of personnel, their primary objective once permitted to begin is SURVIVAL. Following are two guidelines which arise out of the experiences of the Division's budget crisis in late 1974 and early 1975. From these two guidelines one must be left to apply his/her own individual circumstances. The guidelines are as follows:

1. Using every possible means, generate support from users, superiors and other library staff.
2. Provide a quality service which deserves the support generated.

The survival of an innovative project is far more closely examined than an accepted traditional service in spite of the need for the new service. Thus, the innovative service must justify its existence.

In application, the first guideline concerns publicity of the service whether it is through the media, brochures or personal contact. The second guideline follows closely as a corollary to the first. In marketing terms the service must provide a warranty on the "satisfaction guaranteed" claims made in it publicity. These include: knowledgeable, courteous staff; a good collection of information; accurate responses to inquiries; convenient hours and so forth. A new service is similar to a new business, in order to survive it must attract and keep customers by providing quality resources and service.

In the general content of this thesis these guidelines are integral to the subject of citizen access to government information. In the first chapter it was shown that governments depend on the mass media to distribute their limited information to obtain public opinions which are used to assist in government's survival. It was also demonstrated within the Community Development content why citizens need easy acess to accurate government information to fully participate in the governing process. What we see in these guidelines is a direct reponse by the Government Information Division to government attempts to either limit or deny citizens access to their information.

CONCLUSION

This thesis as a case study has demonstrated the problem of citizen access to government information and the way this problem has been approached and dealt with by the Government Information Division. We have also taken an extensive look at how the three levels of government are approaching the problem. The example of the Government Information Division has clearly shown a way in which people can be given access to government information and as a result gain more control over their lives. In concentrating on access to government information the Government Information Division has shown how, in one instance, available government information has been made accessible. In the broader context, however, one major area still requires further study. This area is developing for the Community Development a process which can be used to teach people how to effectively use the available information in their situation to gain the control over their lives that they are seeking. The continuing operation of the Government Information Division has proven that available information can be made accessible; the onus is now on the social sciences and Community Development, in particular, to develop and incorporate mechanisms into its processes which will show people how to use the information once it is available.

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Appendix A

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION DIVISION

POSITION PAPER

April, 1975

SUMMARY

DIVISION GOAL

To facilitate citizen knowledge of and encourage participation in the Canadian democratic process through the provision in a Library setting of information on and related to the three levels of government.

DIVISION TASK

To make government documents and related information, with an urban emphasis, available to the public in an accessible and comprehensible manner. This will involve the acquisition and processing of the material available from and related to the activities of all three levels of government. Displays, models, visual aids and various other means will be used to increase the ability of the Division to convey information to the public.

DIVISION OBJECTIVES

- To make government documents and related information accessible to the public in a comprehensible manner.
- To maintain close working relationship with related information giving and receiving agencies.
- To provide publicity, programs, models and displays to increase the effective dissemination of information.
- To plan and provide for the future developments in the Division necessary to meet the public's needs.

PHILOSPHICAL POSITION

THE SITUATION

The process of effectively maintaining and developing urban environments in Canada involves numerous problems to which there are no easy solutions. One of these problems is citizen access to the growing volume of information concerning government activities. Edmonton, being a developing urban centre, is faced with problems of citizen access to government information.

PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLE

The basic philosophical principle of the Government Information Division is that a democracy lacking built-in mechanisms for popular participation is unresponsive to citizen's needs. Information on government activities provides citizens with the power to play a more effective role in the democratic process. Information plays a critical role in group and community efforts to satisfy their needs, and in encouraging people to participate to bring about changes. The Division's main purpose is to provide this information.

The responsibility of the City of Edmonton is to make relevant information about itself available to the public. Within this responsibility, it is the role of the Government Information Division to make public information easily accessible through a well organized resource centre. Access to government information cannot be effectively justified or practiced apart from government commitment to increased citizen participation. For without such access or participation, government programs will continue, but the potential for people to have input into new programs will not be achieved.

Within this context the Government Information Division is constantly faced with a peculiar situation. Since, as implied above, making government information accessible to people is a first step in political action, to what level of involvement can the Government Information Division proceed within the Public Library? The Division presently recognizes that there are three possible levels of involvement. The first level is making information available only to those groups and individuals who request it. The second level of involvement is encouraging all citizens to participate, if they choose, by providing them with government information. The Division attempts to encourage participation by

placing topical government information in various key locations throughout the City. These two levels of involvement can be viewed as non-aligned involvement in political action. The Division is non-aligned in the sense that it does not take sides on issues when presenting information. The third level of involvement is, as a division, to become actively involved in organization and community groups. In establishing its priorities the Division has concentrated on the first level and done some work at the second. The third level has been considered inappropriate, for only through non-aligned involvement on issues (the provision of available information) can the Division serve the whole community.

Thus the first priority of the Division must be to have an organized and detailed collection to legitimately serve the citizens with an immediate need. To this end the primary emphasis within the Government Information Division is placed on establishing and maintaining a comprehensive collection and reliable service. With a good hold on this priority the Division is beginning to move into the second level. However, lack of staff presents major difficulties for real expansion due to the time-consuming nature of this type of work.

REALIZATION OF POSITION

The following is a list of the programs of the Government Information Division. Each program has a notation showing how it fits into the basic principle of the Division and at what level of involvement it functions.

- Acquisition of government material provides a centralized source of publications available on government activities. (L.1)

- Classification and arrangement of all material makes information easily accessible. (L.1)

- ProFile Index provides accessible comparative information from other cities and provinces. (L.1)

- Urban collection will provide information on alternative ways of dealing with issues. (L.1)

- Loans to workshops bring information to involved groups needing immediate access to documents. (L.1, L.2)

- Video tape equipment bank* provides a communication resource to citizens. (L.1, L.2)

- Community extension worker* promotes the Division, ascertains and attempts to satisfy community informational needs. (L.1, L.2)

- Displays and models provide visual representations of current civic issues and projects. (L.2, L.1)

-Notice board provides a reminder to all citizens of current public announcements. (L.2, L.1)

- Cable television programs provide citizens with information on government activities. (L.2, L.1)

- Factsheets provide general information on complex government matters. (L.2, L.1)

- Pamphlets on service publicize the Division and the material available. (L.2)

*Projects which have Library Board approval but as yet require funding.

LIMITS

Since its inception, the Government Information Division has operated under two constraints which are, in a sense, different aspects of the same problem. The first of these limits is the unavailability of public information on current government activities. Presently, particularly at the municipal level, public access to government information is only possible upon the completion of the initial planning and decision-making stages. Secondly, cooperation has been difficult to obtain from government departments in the organized dissemination of information when it does become public.

These limits will not, however, render the Government Information Division ineffective now or in the future. There has been a perceptible easing of relations with a number of government departments, and hopefully the future will see a swing in City government policy towards a greater degree of citizen participation in planning and decision-making.

APPENDIX B

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

for the

COMMUNITY PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE

Shirley Harris
Director, A.I.D. Service

Bob Harvey
Chairman, Management Team
Area 13 Coordinating Council

Gary Castor
Shelia McKay
Al Purkess
Area 13 Coordinating Council

Alex Szchechina
Edmonton Civic Employees Federation

Carol Crowe
Citizen and Community School Worker

George Fuller
Edmonton Social Planning Council

S. Abererombie
Edmonton Anit-Pollution Group

Ivor Dent
Mayor

Cec Purves
Alderman

Dave Ward
Alderman

Brian Dale
Director of Libraries

G.S. Hughes
Acting Chief Commissioner (2 letters)

C.A.S. Hynam
Associate Coordinator
Interdisiplinary M.A. Program in Community Development
University of Alberta

Glen Eyford
Coordinator
Interdisiplinary M.A. Program in Community Development
University of Alberta

Jack Mason
Associate Chairman
Political Science Department
University of Alberta

P.J. Smith
Professor and Chairman
Geography Department
University of Alberta

Gerald Wright
Assistant Professor
Extension Department
University of Alberta